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A study of the effect of dress on performance among tellers

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF DRESS ON PERFORMANCE AMONG TELLERS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Stephanie Marie Wright

August 2007

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF DRESS ON PERFORMANCE AMONG TELLERS

By Stephanie M. Wright

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between performance and workplace attire. Specifically, this study asked the question: of formal and casual dress, which one results in greater performance based on the definition of performance in this study? The study measured the performance of 14 bank tellers using longitudinal data. The means of four variables representing performance were analyzed. Results of the analysis indicated that teller performance was superior while dressed in casual attire as opposed to formal clothing. Results also indicated that there is a detrimental effect when changing from one form of clothing to another, regardless of the order of switch. This study's findings lend support to previous research and the idea that casual clothing does have positive effects in the workplace, as well as offers valuable insight for organizations concerned with the issue. Future research needs are discussed

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Introduction

It is commonly accepted that people's appearance in the workplace is not only important for their personal success but for the success of the organization in which they work (Easterling, Leslie, & Jones, 1992; Peluchette, Karl, & Rust, 2004; Smith, 1998). Research has begun to look more in depth at the effect different forms of clothing could have on workplace behaviors. Surprisingly though, with such an emphasis on appearance, and the newfound interest in the resulting behaviors, there seems to be a lack of focus on dress and its effect on an employee's actual performance. For example, in their research concerning the "physical environment" aspect of organizational climate, James and Jones (1974) neglected to consider employee attire as relevant. The research reported here was conducted to offer a more solid understanding of the effect dress may have on employee performance.

Anyone who has stepped foot in a department store knows that trends in clothing are constantly changing. What once was acceptable and in style in the 80's is being sold in the nearest second-hand store for 10 cents a piece to a teenager celebrating Halloween. Yet, some of the styles worn in the 70's seem to find themselves being recycled, refurbished, and rolled back onto the floor as the newest trend. However, somewhere between the mustard yellow of the 80's to the fluorescent green of the 90's one tradition has remained: the idea of formal business attire (Chanen, 2005; Lefkowitz, Blake, & Mouton, 1954). The colors, patterns, and fit may have varied, but formal business attire throughout the years has continued to be accepted as a suit and tie for men and pant/skirt suit for women. Over time, those businesses typically falling into the "white collar"

category, and therefore not using uniforms, have followed the same traditions.

Throughout the decades you could travel to any business district or downtown area of a city, on any given workday, and you would find yourself surrounded by men in suits and ties. With the more recent influx of women in the business world, you would find that they too have adopted the same attire as their predecessors. In fact, wearing what was traditionally accepted as clothing worn by a man in a man's world is one way in which women have tailored themselves to fit in a masculine environment (Bromwell, Retrieved 3/13/07). For these reasons, and many more, formal business attire seems to have remained static over time.

All of this considered, it is clear that throughout time organizations have adapted their image to the type of business and clients they are trying to attract. They spend a large amount of money on issues surrounding employee dress (Solomon, 1987 as cited by Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993 p.32). If they don't have a specialist onsite, marketing, fashion, architecture, and design consultants are contracted to assist in creating a desirable image that complements the organization's goals and values. As such, it may come as a surprise that organizations place little value in the ability of dress to affect their bottom line numbers. Not only do organizations fail to appreciate the importance of proper dress in terms of the bottom line, but a lack of coverage exists in the research field as well (Franz & Norton, 2001; O'Reilly, 1989 as cited in Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993 p.32). In fact, Smith (1998) referred to the issue when discussed in one of his articles as being "written with tongue in cheek" (p.34).

This study aims at addressing the lack of regard for this topic and to make the link between employee dress and organization's bottom line earnings through performance. This link is made based on the assumption that high performance equals a greater bottom line.

History of Professional Dress

Historically, employees who wear professional dress are viewed as having higher status than those dressed in a less formal manner (Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). An example in support of this is the study conducted by Lefkowitz, et al. (1954) that used a man dressed in a pressed suit, shined shoes, and white shirt with a tie to signify their high status individual manipulation. The same man dressed in well worn shoes, trousers, and an unpressed denim shirt was used to represent their low status individual. Their predictions about perceived status based solely on differences in dress were confirmed in their findings that those dressed in the more traditional fashion were regarded as having higher status.

Likewise, those dressed in the traditional professional attire are viewed in a more positive manner such as being more successful, more competent, and more productive (Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, & Mackie-Lewis, 1997; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). Terms and phrases such as "dress for success" and "Suits" were and still are used in conjunction with the idea that those who have climbed the ladder of success are those who dress accordingly (Johnson, 1990 as cited by Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993; Smith, 1998). The word "Suits," used by blue-collar workers to refer to their "white collar" managers, depicts the belief that those wearing such attire have status and power (Johnson, 1990 as cited by

Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). This refers to the fact that those in the upper part of the hierarchy typically are the ones wearing the suits. Similarly, Rafaeli, et al.(1997) discuss employees' use of dress in defining their place in an organization's hierarchy. They maintain that those in more supervisory positions are more apt to wear suits, while those in clerical positions are more apt to wear less formal attire.

Present State of Workplace Attire

Having discussed all of this, it may seem contradictory that recently there has been a push for a "more casual workplace" (Falconi, 1996). Some would say that this push began with the high-tech industry. With the Internet came an influx of computer programmers who were permitted to dress casually at work with the thought that it might promote creativity and innovation (Kaplan-Leiserson, 2000 as cited in Hughes, 2005 pg.2). The idea that those working in the environment found in the IT industry would be more satisfied and productive working in comfortable clothing has transformed into a less industry-specific movement (Hughes, 2005).

With practices like casual Fridays or dressing down for the summer months, organizations have found themselves shifting to less traditional clothing. In fact, many organizations have adopted the khaki pants and polo shirts look entirely (Flexing the rules in the business workplace, 1997). Although the degree to which a business's "dress-down" may vary from a more formal-casual look like dress shirts and pants without a tie or blazer to slacks and a nice shirt, the overall message remains the same; a shift to a less formal dress is taking place (Flexing the rules in the business workplace, 1997; Falconi, 1996; Franz & Norton, 2001; Hughes, 2005).

The critics of this movement have raised some valid questions concerning its possible effects (Falconi, 1996). Specifically, the shift to a more relaxed work environment has provoked questions concerning the effects it may have on organizational performance. These concerns have resulted in recent publications of articles and studies focused on the consequences of relaxed dress (Falconi, 1996; Flexing the rules in the business workplace, 1997; Franz & Norton, 2001).

One proposed consequence suggests that casual dress may result in more relaxed expectations for employees. These relaxed expectations may result in such things as increased tardiness, absenteeism, and other such negative workplace behaviors (Hughes, 2005). Another issue of concern is regarding an organization's prospective customers' perception of the organization and whether or not they choose to do business with the organization. The sole purpose of marketing for businesses is to communicate to a target audience in an effort to encourage them to use their services or purchase their products (Definitions of marketing, 2007). Dress is commonly accepted as a form of communicating something about the person wearing the clothing, and in turn about the company the person is employed by (Rafaeli & Dutton, 1997). For this reason, dress can be used to market the organization in which the employee is representing.

A less obvious threat to an organization's success is effects dress may have on employee behavior, specifically performance. While much attention is given to the direct effects through customer perception, there is a need for a more refined focus on performance. The next section will focus on the history of literature regarding dress in the workplace, followed by a detailed description of the limitations of past research.

Review of Current Literature on Workplace Dress

The idea that there is an effect of clothing and appearance on peoples' perceptions of those wearing the clothing has been well-accepted and well addressed (Forsythe, 1990; Jenkins & Atkins, 1990; Kwon, 1994; Lubker, Watson, Visek & Geer, 2005; Mehrabian, 1981; Morris, Gorham, Cohen & Huffman, 1996; Peluchette, 2004; Rafaeli, et al., 1997). These perceptions are said to change the behavior of those around them (Falconi, 1996). Most of the focus up to this point in research has dealt with people's perceptions of others' dress (Peluchette, 2004). Easterling, Leslie, and Jones (1992) can be quoted writing "it is well documented from a behavioral standpoint that dress has a significant impact upon perception and image formation" (p. 211). In his famous book *Silent Messages*, Mehrabian (1981) explained that a person's decision about his/her liking of an individual is a combination of verbal liking, vocal liking, and facial liking. Mehrabian research he found that fifty-five percent of a person's decisions regarding their liking of another individual was said to be made considering facial liking (the appearance of the person), meaning that regardless of what they say or how they say it, people are mostly judged by how they look.

The Arguments Surrounding Formal Dress

The common consensus of research concerning the importance of perception on impressions is that more attractive, more formally dressed, and well groomed individuals receive more positive feedback and attention concerning what type of individual they are believed to be (Barnes & Rosenthal, 1985; Forsyth, 1990; Lubker, 2005). It has been said that a person dressed in a more conservative fashion is seen as being "more

intelligent, mature, generous, sincere, trustful, understanding and dependable” then those dressed in less conservative fashion (Easterling, Leslie, & Jones, 1992, p.212).

Based on these findings, past research has also reported changes in human behavior based on their perception of another individual. One study found that individuals dressed in more formal attire, thus being seen as having more status, were more likely to be followed when crossing a street on a “don’t walk” traffic signal (Lefkowitz, et al., 1954). Bickman (1974) also found that more individuals would give a person change for a telephone call if the person was dressed well. These are just a few examples of the ways in which dress and appearance can influence the perceptions and behavior of onlookers.

More attractive people are assumed to be happier and more successful than their less attractive counterparts. Considering that those wearing formal clothing are assumed to be seen as having higher status and more prestige (Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993), one would make the connection that formal clothing would lead to the same positive assumptions about oneself. This increase in believed legitimacy while wearing the clothing should promote an increase in productivity among employees (Green, Sandall, & Phelps, 2005). In other words, an increase in productivity might be a phenomenon that affects the person wearing the clothing as well.

Further supporting the idea that formal dress is better for performance is the suggestion offered by Brown and Leigh (1996) that when a work environment is viewed by the employees in a positive way the employees respond by putting forth more effort to support the organization’s goals. It has already been stated that those wearing formal

dress are perceived by others as being more competent, intelligent, and productive among many other positive attributes (Rafaeli, et al., 1997; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). So, if the organization requires employees dress more formally, those employees will be more apt to view it in a positive way. The employees' positive thoughts about the organization will result in increased effort to support the goals of the organization. Judge, Bono, and Locke (2000) found that increased effort is related to increased performance. Thus, formal attire can be seen as increasing performance through these theoretical links.

The Arguments Surrounding Casual Dress

It is suggested that dressing in a more casual fashion offers some beneficial perks to employees. First, it is more cost effective for employees (Rafaeli, et al., 1997), and second, it helps to boost employee morale (Flexing the rules in the business workplace, 1997; Hughes, 2005). Similarly, McGee (1988) suggests that having incentive programs that offer rewards such as casual dress days improves both morale and productivity. McGee suggests that this relationship can be explained by the idea that recognition and incentive rewards might have a deeper meaning than just the prize itself, and because of this it creates a special connection and bond with those in the organization. It is thought to build commitment and strengthen the bond which will breed happier and more productive employees.

In connection with this, research has also shown that increased morale is closely related to satisfaction (Abbott, 2003). Other research concerning dress focused on how it might play an indirect role on a company's performance through employee satisfaction. Although some studies have shown otherwise, past research has supported the idea that a

satisfied employee makes for a more productive employee (Abdel-Halim, 1980; Schleicher, Watt & Greguras, 2004). If increased morale or satisfaction results in increased performance, the connection should be made that allowing employees to wear casual clothing may indirectly result in increased performance. These findings may support the idea that casual clothing in the workplace creates positive outcomes.

However, other research has suggested that “relaxed dress” leads to “relaxed productivity” (Hughes, 2005). In addition, to this it has been reported that the rise in casual wear has resulted in a decrease of positive work behaviors. This would make sense considering that how a person looks is said to affect the way he/she feels, and the way he/she feels affects the way they act. If a person is feeling relaxed and comfortable, some suggest that this might make them be more relaxed in their work ethic. Likewise, if a person is dressed for business this might show in their productivity level.

It should be clear at this point that results concerning this topic have been mixed and inconclusive. Some articles suggest that casual clothing will increase morale and in turn increase productivity (Flexing the rules in the business workplace, 1997). Other articles have found that formal clothing has positive effects on subjects’ performance (Lefkowitz, Blake, Mouton, 1954). While much of the research argues that better dressed usually are perceived as having more positive characteristics (Rafaeli, et al., 1997; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993), Gibbons & Kleiner (1993) found that the better dressed does not always get a “better assessment.” These are just a few examples of the discrepancies found concerning this area of study.

Given the clear inconsistencies within this field of research, one thing is certain; employee attire, whether formal or casual, can affect an organization in one way or another. Both forms of dress have beneficial and detrimental effects. The true question then must be, which one is more beneficial and less detrimental to an organization?

Limitations of Current Literature

One of the major limitations of past research concerning the effects of dress in the workplace is the fact that much of the research is out of date. Many recent studies discuss the transformation of dress in organizations and the role it plays (Hughes, 2005; Rafaeli, et al., 1997; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993), but those pertaining to the focus of this study are mostly outdated (Barnes & Rosenthal, 1985; Bickman, 1974; Forsythe, 1990; Solomon, 1981). This is not to say that a study conducted in 1974 or 1990 should be discarded as having no use to current research. However, in this particular area of research variables that may have an effect are constantly changing, such as the fashion trends of the time, such that the findings of a study in 1974 may be different from those that of a study today. As it is important in any field of research, keeping current on this matter is necessary in maintaining the most accurate and valid information possible. This study aims at renewing the research on this matter and updating the findings to best fit the current times.

To better understand the goal of this study it is important to understand that the majority of research in this area is focused on the perceptions others have of a person based on the clothing that he/she is wearing (Forsythe, 1990; Jenkins & Atkins, 1990; Kwon, 1994; Lubker, Watson, Visek & Geer, 2005; Mehrabian, 1981; Morris, Gorham,

Cohen & Huffman, 1996; Peluchette, 2004; Rafaeli, et al., 1997). Although this is an important issue to consider, a need exists to examine the actual, rather than perceived effects of clothing. Instead of looking at whether or not people “perceive” those that are in professional clothing versus casual clothing as being more or less productive, research needs to also examine the actual change in performance that might take place. Are the perceptions of competence and higher performance for those in formal clothing (Forsythe, 1990; Lubker, Watson, Visek, & Geer, 2005) simply an error of perception, or are they accurate?

In assessing past research on dress it is clear that many of the studies have used research methods that do not always result in the most accurate findings. One study looked at women’s use of clothing in identifying themselves (Guy & Banim, 2000). They conducted an experiment in which only 15 respondents were used and their data consisted of the subjects’ personal accounts of how they felt in their clothing and what the experimenters considered as a “wardrobe interview.” The method of self-report used here is highly subjective and allows too many opportunities for interference from variables the experimenters were not interested in. Pelchette, Karl, and Rust (2004) did not conduct an experiment, nor did they use subjective measures like Guy and Banim (2000). They used surveys to measure the effects of attire in the workplace. Surveys, although a valid source of information, cannot be seen as without flaws. With such things as inflated and deflated answers, variability in answers on scoring scales, and subjects differing interpretations of survey questions there is a need to account for variability not associated with the variable of interest. Rucker and Anderson (1999)

conducted phone interviews to investigate the importance of formal attire in the workplace, and Solomon (1981) set up mock interviews to study role behavior as a result of attire. Many of the downfalls to using interviews are similar to those of a questionnaire but also include such things as interviewer effects. These studies are just examples of many that use the less preferable methods of research. The purpose of using these examples is not to discredit the research that was conducted, but simply to suggest that the current study will offer more objective information. Through the use of better research methods this study will help validate the findings of past research conducted in a more subjective or manipulated manner.

Similarly, studies that have measured changes in behavior associated with dress have not been conducted in a real-world setting. The confounding effects of research in an experimental study are often hard to measure and fully understand (Barnes & Rosenthal, 1985; Rosenthal, 1976). For that reason, measuring the behavior of employees in the real world work environment without the resulting experimental or observational effects can lend valuable information that the other situations may not. The information gathered in the current study deals with real world employees in the everyday work environment without an observer standing by. Such phenomena as the Hawthorne Effect do not play a role in an unobserved setting. As such, the final results of this study should be a more valid depiction of the effects of dress in an organization than those conducted in an off-site, observed, or manipulated environment.

Finally, past research fails to make a direct connection to dress as a factor when considering an organization's bottom-line. Many of the studies make the connection

from dress to performance, but they do not give reason as to how this can affect their earnings. Due to the fact that this study will look at employees whose job is, by nature, to handle money, it might be easier for organizations to understand the proposed link between dress and performance, and how this might affect the bottom line. Although very specific to a particular position, the addition of this example to the overall completeness of research on the topic might lend as a stepping stone for other research to broaden the scope of knowledge. In this case the question being studied is whether or not clothing will affect performance. The obvious association between performance and the bottom line is what makes this study more useful to organizations. So, the findings may be used as the “simpler” example of how dress can affect the bottom line.

This Study's Purpose and Predictions

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between performance and workplace attire. Specifically, this study asks the question; of formal and casual dress, which one results in greater performance based on the definition of performance in this study?

Due to the lack of consistency in findings from past research this study does not hypothesize the results to be in one direction or another, but rather will examine only whether there is a difference. The purpose of this study is exploratory in nature.

In other words, it will address the issue of out-of-date research by reporting information based on up-to-date data. This study will improve on past research use of the perception of performance by measuring the subjects' actual performance. Third, the methodology used will address the issue of the less desirable methods reported as being

used in past studies. Finally, the real world setting will offer a more realistic picture of the effect dress might have on performance than those offered in an experimental setting.

Method

Participants and Organizational Environment

Participants were 14 tellers whose age ranged from 19 to 58 years of age, and all but one teller was female ($n = 14$). Of the 14 tellers 20% ($n = 3$) were considered part-time (hours worked < 32) while 80% ($n = 12$) were considered full time (hours worked > 32). Forty percent ($n = 6$) of the Tellers were Level I Tellers (an entry level position), while the remaining 60% ($n = 9$) were Level II Tellers (a more advanced position). The Tellers' experience and time spent with the bank ranged from 9 months to 11 years ($M = 4.21$).

The organization in which this study was conducted is a business bank that caters its products, services, and appearance to attract more high-end customers. As a result of its customer base the Bank's appearance, including their facilities, its employees, and its overall image, is extremely important in maintaining a competitive edge. The Banks' vision and mission statement is focused on serving the customer to the best of its abilities while maintaining a pleasant environment where its employees are happy to come to work. While a high degree of emphasis is placed on the importance of employees maintaining "dress, grooming and hygiene standards" (Personal appearance and demeanor, 2006, p.1) that represent the professional appearance and "image the Company desires" (Personal appearance and demeanor, 2006, p.1), the Bank also acknowledge the importance of maintaining an environment that fosters satisfied employees. In an effort to balance these two very different but important goals, the Bank's Dress policy allows

employees to dress in “corporate casual” attire for a few months in the summer. The rest of the year they are required to wear “professional business” attire.

Dress descriptions. As stated before, the Bank allows their employees to wear corporate casual attire a few months out of every year, the rest of the year they are to be dressed in professional business attire. Varying descriptions exist in current scholarly and business articles as to what defines formal or casual dress. For this reason, the Bank follows their own Personal Appearance and Demeanor Policy as their definition of what the terms casual and formal mean.

Professional business attire can be defined as describing what is historically accepted as formal business dress (Chanen, 2005; Lefkowitz, et al., 1954). This is limited to suits with a tie or slacks with a dress shirt and tie for men, and pant/skirt suits for women. The employees are also permitted to wear dress shirts with the Bank logo printed on them, and women permitted to wear Capri pants made of professional pant material. Women are required to wear hosiery or trouser socks and men required to wear trouser socks.

Corporate casual attire consists of collared shirts, polo shirts, and blouses or summer dresses (for women). Men are not required to wear a tie and women not required to wear hosiery. The employees are also permitted to wear a more casual dress pant or slacks such as Dockers and khaki. Employees do have the option of choosing not to wear corporate casual attire in which case they must abide by the professional dress policy.

It is important to note that regardless of business casual or formal business attire there are some guidelines that must be followed at all times. At no time are employees

permitted to wear sweatshirts, fleece vest, or cargo pants. Their clothing cannot be too tight or restrictive, nor should it have tears, holes, or patches. Denim is not to worn at any time unless notified for a special occasion, and shorts or skorts are never permitted. Spaghetti straps, halter tops, and t-shirts are never permitted, as well as tennis shoes, thong-style sandals, and overalls. The Bank also enforces a strict policy on jewelry, tattoos, and body piercings. Visible tattoos are not allowed nor are facial or body piercing with the exception of up to three ear piercings. Clothing cannot be revealing and must always be clean, neat, pressed, and appropriate.

Teller Performance Measures

Teller performance was measured in terms of their error count and transaction count. There were five types of performance studied: 1) Teller Transaction Count, 2) Teller Delete Records, 3) Teller Deletes per Transaction, 4) Teller Outages, and 5) Descriptive information. The following is a description of what each type of data represents.

Transaction count. An example of a transaction is cashing a check or making a deposit. One customer can make multiple transactions in one visit. The variable used to measure performance was calculated by adding four weeks worth of daily transactions together to create a number representing the amount of transactions completed in one month. To account for the fact that tellers work differing hours from each other this figure was then divided by the number of hours that each teller worked per month. In other words, the final variable is the total monthly transactions divided by the number of hours worked that month. Transaction count was used to measure performance under the

assumption that the more transactions a teller completes the better their performance rating.

Teller deletes. A delete is simply when a supervisor deletes a teller's error from the system before it has a chance to be processed. A supervisor must delete it as the Tellers do not have the access to do so. An example of an error that might need to be deleted is if a teller processes a deposit and then realizes that they inputted the wrong amount. If this occurs then the transaction will be deleted and the correct one will be entered. Each time a transaction is deleted it is logged into the saved information on the Core Processing System for the Bank. From this information a report can be generated that details how many deletes a teller had per shift. The variable used to measure performance was calculated in the same way transaction count was calculated. The number of deletes was totaled for four weeks (a month) and then divided by the number of hours worked that month. Again, dividing the monthly figure by hours worked that month provides a number that can be equally compared with other tellers. The number of teller deletes was used to measure performance under the assumption that the more deletes a teller has the poorer their performance rating.

Deletes per transaction. Although teller deletes provides an index, it does not take into account the fact that the number of deletes may vary due to the amount of transactions they do. It is not sufficient enough to say that they did X amount of transactions more while wearing one type of clothing (as measured above using only transaction count), if in all reality they were making more errors due to the increased speed. In other words, this variable was intended as a more detailed look at how errors in

the form of deletes may be a function of transaction per hour (speed). This number was calculated using both the number of deletes per month and transactions per month. The number of deletes per month was divided by the number of transactions completed in that same month. This variable's purpose is to give an idea of the teller's performance based on how quickly the teller was completing transactions.

Teller outages. When a teller is "out" or has an "outage" they either have more or less money than they should have in their drawer at the end of the shift. This means that their draw is "out" of balance. For example, if the computer says that a teller should have X amount of dollars and they count their drawer and have Y amount, they are "out." Outages are used to measure performance.

A teller outage is considered an error. More outages imply more errors, and more errors result in decreased performance. Whether the teller was over or short was not considered to be different errors by nature. Although in one instance the Bank will lose money they are both equally the same in terms of the degree of error in performance. It should also be addressed that a teller's outage can be three cents or one hundred dollars and will still be entered as one error. In this case the actual numerical number will not be considered. There is no way of knowing whether the three cents was the result of one error or five, just as a hundred dollar outage could have been an error with a one hundred dollar bill or the combination of multiple errors that added up to one hundred dollars.

The variable used to measure performance is the total number of days a teller had an outage per month. This total cannot exceed 20 due to the fact that there can only be one outage possible per shift and only 20 possible shifts in a month (5 business days by 4

weeks). Due to the nature of this variable, and the fact that each teller is limited to a maximum of 20 outages per month, it was not necessary to divide the monthly total by hours worked as done with other variables.

It is important to note that teller deletes and teller outages are inherently different errors. A teller delete is an error that is noticed during the teller shift and corrected before the system has time to process. A delete can be done when currency was involved (i.e., a deposit with cash involved or cashing a check) or when it was a non-cash transaction (i.e., deposit of checks only). A teller outage is an error that takes place during the shift (involving miscounting actual currency) that is not noticed. In this case the error cannot be corrected and will only be caught at the end of a shift. A deleted error will never result in an outage because as it is deleted it is corrected.

Descriptive information. Descriptive information about the Tellers was also gathered. Teller tenure is simply the amount of time in years that a teller has been at the bank. Teller level is a title that a teller holds depending on their experience and skills that they offer the teller line. A “Teller I” is the standard teller, while a “Teller II” is a more advanced position. It can be assumed that those in the Teller II position will make fewer errors and will have superior performance in comparison with the Teller I employees. This will be considered in the analysis of Teller performance. As discussed above, the Teller Schedule number simply accounts for the fact that the Tellers may work varying schedules. For each day of data collected each Teller was assigned the number of hours they worked on that day (the days were then consolidated to monthly data).

Procedure

Data were collected by obtaining information from the Bank's archived documents and from generated reports of information pulled off of the Banking System. Due to retention rules and regulations, data were only available for a year and a half's worth of work. Data were gathered using multiple sources of information. The following is a breakdown of what sources were utilized for each form of data.

The Daily Cash Count Log was used to obtain a Teller's transaction figure. At the end of each shift, a teller is required to print a report that itemizes the currency in their drawer. Included in this Log is a Teller Transaction Count. This figure is simply a count of how many transactions the teller completed during their shift. This was logged in the data spreadsheet per teller per day, and then consolidated into a month by adding 4 weeks worth of transactions.

Teller Delete Records were retrieved from the Banking System used onsite by generating a report that totaled out how many deletes a teller had per day for the designated dates. The report that was generated for this study went back a year and a half. If the Teller did not have any deletes for a day they would not be listed on the report and would be assigned a zero in the spreadsheet. Data were entered in the spreadsheet per teller per day and consolidated into a month.

Teller Outages is another figure reported on a Daily Cash Count Log. If the teller's cash was short or over it would have been listed at the end of the report. To retrieve this information the logs were pulled (dating back 1.5 years) and the figures were entered into a spreadsheet per Teller per day and consolidated into a month.

Teller descriptive information was gathered by interviewing the Tellers' supervisor and examining the employee files.

The original processing system used to enter data was Microsoft Excel. All the data were exported from the Excel file to an SPSS file and statistical analyses were then conducted.

Two sources were used to gather information concerning the definition of casual and formal dress and the dates of casual dress was permitted during the summer. The Personal Appearance and Demeanor Policy gives a detailed description of the type of clothing and attire that is appropriate on a normal work day as well as a more casual day (what this organization refers to as "corporate casual"). At the beginning of every summer an email is sent out to all bank employees to let them know when they can transition into business casual dress. At the end of every summer a subsequent email will be sent out letting the employees know when they must transition back into formal business attire. The Bank's email archives were used to retrieve these emails and document the proper dates.

Results

Transactions Per Hour

Means and standard deviations of the Tellers' average transactions per hour each month were analyzed. As seen in Table 1 overall means were calculated separately for the months in which employees were dressed in formal attire and for the months when employees were dress in casual attire. Results seem to indicate that overall fewer transactions were completed when the Tellers were dressed in formal attire ($M = 7.97$) than in casual attire ($M = 8.37$). In other words, when measuring teller performance by number of transaction completed per hour the Tellers' performance was better when dressed in casual attire. Using a monthly scale, this would mean that 80 more transaction were conducted per month when in casual dress. This difference has practical significance due to the fact that 80 more transactions completed in one month could be 80 more customers assisted; as compared to what could be a smaller number, 80 transactions is not a figure to look past.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics For Average Hourly Transactions Per Month.

Season and Month	M	s.d.	n
Formal (Winter Months)	7.93	.03	14
Month 1	6.95	2.83	14
Month 2	7.86	4.06	14
Month 3	7.40	3.28	14
Month 4	7.21	2.47	14
Month 5	7.49	3.06	14
Month 6	8.21	3.17	14
Month 7	8.29	3.15	14
Month 8	8.32	3.09	14
Month 9	9.09	3.70	14
Month 15	8.50	3.89	14
Casual (Summer Months)	8.37	.16	14
Month 10	8.11	2.02	14
Month 11	8.42	2.82	14
Month 12	8.50	3.53	14
Month 13	8.33	3.37	14
Month 14	8.46	3.41	14

As seen in Figure 1 the monthly average transaction count in the months that employees were dressed in casual attire are more consistently similar than those months when they were dressed in formal business attire. In other words, teller performance in terms of average transactions completed per hour fluctuated more while wearing formal clothing. This suggests that not only did the Tellers complete more transactions per hour while casually dressed, but their performance was superior in the sense that it was more reliable and consistent as well. A second effect seen when analyzing the data per month is a change effect. Meaning that when there is a change in form of clothing that there is a detrimental effect on performance regardless of what type of change. This can be seen in the transition from month nine to 10, and from month 14 to 15. More details about this effect will be discussed later in this section.

Figure 1. Average transactions per hour by month.

Deletes Per Hour

Means and standard deviations of the Tellers average deletes per hour each month were analyzed. As seen in Table 2 overall means were calculated separately for the months in which employees were dressed in formal attire and for the months when employees were dress in casual attire. Results indicated that overall there was no significant difference between deletes per hour needed when the Tellers were dressed in formal attire ($M = .031$) than in casual attire ($M = .032$). In other words, Tellers performance as a function of this variable was the same.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics For Average Hourly Deletes Per Month.

Season and Month	M	s.d.	n
Formal (Winter Months)	.031	.007	14
Month 1	.031	.026	14
Month 2	.030	.024	14
Month 3	.026	.025	14
Month 4	.028	.019	14
Month 5	.015	.014	14
Month 6	.033	.042	14
Month 7	.030	.024	14
Month 8	.042	.029	14
Month 9	.035	.035	14
Month 15	.038	.066	14
Casual (Summer Months)	.032	.005	14
Month 10	.039	.021	14
Month 11	.032	.021	14
Month 12	.029	.026	14
Month 13	.036	.030	14
Month 14	.025	.025	14

As seen in Figure 2 average deletes per hour does not seem to have a pattern that extends throughout the entire time frame. One observation worth noting is the change effect that takes place after a change from one form of clothing to another. The larger the number of deletes per hour the lesser the performance, just as seen in average transactions per hour by month, there is a decrease in month 10 and month 15 after a shift from one clothing to another.

Figure 2. Average deletes per hour by month.

Deletes Per Transaction

Means and standard deviations of the Tellers' average deletes per transaction each month were analyzed. As seen in Table 3 overall means were calculated separately for the months in which employees were dressed in formal attire and for the months when employees were dress in casual attire. Tellers average deletes per transaction in this study is viewed as a form of efficiency. The less deletes needed per transaction the more efficient a teller is seen as being. Results indicated that overall deletes per transaction did not significantly differ when the Tellers were dressed in formal attire ($M = .0135$) than in casual attire ($M = .0140$). In other words, teller performance was the same when dressed in casual and formal attire.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics For Average Deletes Per Transaction.

Season and Month	M	s.d.	n
Formal (Winter Months)	.014	.003	14
Month 1	.013	.011	14
Month 2	.013	.011	14
Month 3	.011	.010	14
Month 4	.014	.012	14
Month 5	.007	.006	14
Month 6	.015	.019	14
Month 7	.013	.011	14
Month 8	.019	.015	14
Month 9	.014	.013	14
Month 15	.016	.030	14
Casual (Summer Months)	.014	.003	14
Month 10	.018	.011	14
Month 11	.014	.008	14
Month 12	.012	.013	14
Month 13	.016	.013	14
Month 14	.010	.009	14

As seen in Figure 3 performance based on efficiency seems to fluctuate from one month to the next more so than the other variables. With this in mind, it should be noted that no pattern exists within the timeframe analyzed. Both the months for formal and casual attire appear to be random by nature, with one exception. Average deletes per transaction show the same change effect as the previous two variables.

Figure 3. Average deletes per transaction by month.

It should be noted that in the business world some believe that efficiency in terms of errors as a function of speed and quantity, will decrease when the employee has a lighter workload as compared to a heavier workload. This implies that the busier a teller is, and the more transactions they are doing, the lower their chances of making an error (deletes in this case). In order to honor this possibility correlations between transaction count per month and deletes per month were analyzed. Of 15 possible correlations only two were statistically significant. Transaction count and deletes in the first month ($r = .67, p < .001$) and the 11th month were correlated ($r = .77, p < .001$). The other 13 months did not show significant results. Not only was there only two months in which the variables are correlated, which gives little support, but they are positively correlated which does not support the suggested relationship, either. In this case, the data collected from this study is not effected by or a function of a negative relationship between workload (transactions completed) and number of errors (deletes needed).

Average Outages

Means and standard deviations of the Tellers' average outages each month were analyzed. As seen in Table 4 overall means were calculated separately for the months in which employees were dressed in formal attire and for the months when employees were dress in casual attire. Results seem to indicate that overall tellers had more outages when dressed in formal attire ($M = 2.84$) than in casual attire ($M = 2.55$). In other words, when measuring teller performance by number of outages each month tellers' performance seemed to be better when dressed in casual attire. Specifically, when wearing casual clothing tellers had an average of 5.8 fewer outages each month then when wearing

formal clothing. This difference has practical significance due to the fact that 5-6 outages in one month can amount to quite a few hours of time spent on fixing the errors. When there is an outage at the end of a shift the teller has to recount their entire draw looking for the error. If they are not able to find it themselves they have to have another employee look through their draw. If this employee is unable to find why there is an outage then multiple people will spend as much time as needed looking for it the next shift. This process can take quite a few working hours for one or multiple employees. Although only 5-6 more outages might occur in one month while wearing formal clothing these 5-6 outages can take a substantial amount of time and money to find and fix.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics For Average Monthly Outage.

Season and Month	M	s.d.	n
Formal (Winter Months)	2.84	.29	14
Month 1	2.43	1.60	14
Month 2	3.29	2.67	14
Month 3	3.14	3.23	14
Month 4	2.79	1.76	14
Month 5	2.71	2.3	14
Month 6	3.07	1.90	14
Month 7	2.86	1.46	14
Month 8	2.79	1.97	14
Month 9	2.93	2.27	14
Month 15	2.36	1.95	14
Casual (Summer Months)	2.55	.47	14
Month 10	2.93	2.46	14
Month 11	1.75	1.09	14
Month 12	2.86	3.80	14
Month 13	2.57	1.55	14
Month 14	2.64	1.65	14

As seen in Figure 4 there seems to be a lack of pattern in the monthly means for outages. Neither casual nor formal clothing seems to be more consistent than the other, and performance based on outages throughout the entire time frame seems to be random. This suggests that the overall effect of casual clothing will only be seen over a long period of time. In other words, if one were to compare performance across only two months, one casual and one formal, it is not as likely that there will be a true difference beyond chance itself. It is only when the data is analyzed after an extended time frame that the positive affects of casual clothing are apparent. It should also be noted that, unlike the other three variables, this variable does not show the change effect. Explanation will be discussed later in this section.

Figure 4. Average outages by month.

Overall Summary

In examining all four variables as a measure of performance as a whole one might suggest that there is no difference in performance between casual and formal attire. In a more thorough analysis of the data another conclusion should be reached. The two variables, transactions per hour and total outages, that support the idea that casual clothing seems to be better, both show differences in behavior worth acknowledging. In other words, the results indicate that teller performance while wearing casual clothing overall exceeds that of their performance while in formal attire.

In reviewing the results a pattern was noticed throughout three of the four variables. All variables with the exception of total outages seemed to be affected by what this study is terming the “change effect.” As seen in Figures 1 to 3 there is a decrease in performance after a switch from one form of clothing to the other. This effect is present whether switching from formal to casual attire or from casual to formal, but the effect is slightly stronger when going from casual to formal attire. It is proposed that this effect is not seen in the outage variable due to a ceiling effect. This is due to the fact that it is only possible to have one outage per teller per shift as compared to the other variables where the options are limitless. This may have caused the change effect to not show due to the fact that a difference could have existed but is not seen.

It is also important to note that calculations were run to examine the possibility that the without the change effect the result may have varied. It was found that the overall results remained the same, but the differences between means of the two groups were exaggerated. In other words, there is still a difference between the number of

transactions completed per hour in the months employees were dressed casually than the months they were dressed formally this difference was greater. Thus, using the same example, even more transactions per hour were completed in casual clothing than in formal clothing when the months effected by the change were not considered. This is the case for all variables when the first month after a dress change is taken out of the analysis.

Discussion

This study's purpose was to examine the relationship between performance and workplace attire. Specifically, this study asked the question: of formal and casual dress, which one results in greater performance based on the definition of performance in this study?

Due to the fact that this study was exploratory in nature, there was no hypothesized direction. However, it was hypothesized that a difference would exist in teller performance while wearing formal clothing as compared to when they dressed in casual attire. As seen in the results there seemed to be a small difference in each of the variables measuring performance between casual and formal attire. However, only two of the variables seem to have differences significant enough to consider. Both of these variables, transactions per hour and total outages, show the Tellers' performance as being better while dressed in casual attire. Overall casual attire seems to be the most beneficial clothing to wear when measuring performance using the four variables used in this study.

The change effect that was found shows that type of clothing worn is not the only factor, but switching from one type of attire to another can make a difference in performance as well. It has been suggested that clothing is one way of defining an individual's role in an organization (Bickman, 1974) this change effect phenomena can be explained by the fact that every time there is a change in dress the employee is forced to refocus their understanding of their role in the organization. The transition period may have detrimental effects on their performance.

Implications of Study

Theoretically it can be argued that this study offers the same confusion as mixed findings in the past. It finds behavioral differences for both casual and formal attire, but as discussed previously these differences are only substantial when dressed in casual clothing. In other words this study offers support for research that has found casual clothing to be more beneficial to employees' performance at work.

The findings of this study can be used to help organizations, banks specifically, create a dress policy that best promotes increased performance from their employees. In this case it was found that casual clothing seems to result in greater performance. Of course, there are always other factors to consider (i.e., How will the customers respond to dressing down?), but when deciding to go casual or not employee performance is definitely of great importance. The findings of this study imply that those considering adopting a dress code based on a possible increase in performance should consider dressing down. It seems as if the traditional formal dress in the workplace no longer carries the same clout as it has throughout the history of workplace dress. In other words, eliminating the hassle of formal attire in the workplace can actually help organizations increase their bottom-line numbers through an increased employee performance.

In addition to considering casual attire as a part of their dress policy, businesses should be aware that switching from one form of dress to another may have detrimental effects on their employees' performance. Switching once a year might not raise as much caution as a company who has regular dress down days, for example, Fridays. In this case the constant change in environment can result in an inflated change effect. The

employee might not have time to adjust to the new clothing before they are back to the old dress. This is a possibility that should receive more attention in future research.

It should be noted that there are limitations to the current study, and none of the findings should be accepted as final. As with any research there are always aspects that were not considered and aspects that vary depending on individual circumstance. For this reason, it is not recommended that organizations use this study as a sole reason in making decisions concerning their organizations policies without finding confirmation through other sources.

Strengths of Study

The greatest strength of this study was the methodology. Using archival data that were collected without the expectation to be used as data eliminated the opportunity for outside influences to play a role. Of course there are always outside factors that influence the effects of the variable of interest, but the methods of this study eliminated possible effects due to deflated or inflated responses, as found in surveys, observer effects, as found in observational studies, and researcher effects, found in experiments. Unlike any other study on this topic, this study was the true work environment measured over time to get a real snapshot of any changes in employee performance.

The second strength is that this study measured performance over time. Doing this allowed for any fluctuation in performance due to factors outside of the scope of dress (i.e. an employee had family issues and therefore their performance was suffering) to be minimized. As with the measurement of any human behavior, the behavior will

fluctuate from day to day depending on the life events of that individual. Measuring the behavior overtime allows for these fluctuations to balance each other out.

Limitations of Study

The most detrimental limitation to this study is assumed to be the degree of variance in dress between casual and formal dress days. There is a considerable difference between what is historically accepted as formal dress attire, a suit and tie for men and pant/skirt suit for women (Chanen, 2005; Lefkowitz, et al., 1954), and what the employees at the Bank actually wear on formal dress days. Where a sweater and slacks might be appropriate for a formal dress day at the Bank, there is clearly a more lax dress code than you might find in an organization that enforces historically formal attire. Due to the more relaxed formal dress code the difference between formal and casual attire at the Bank is not as obvious as it could be. The results of this study might have had greater significance if the difference between formal and casual attire had been more pronounced. It could be that results were weak due to the fact that the employees did not feel as if there was a considerable difference in their clothing, and therefore behavioral changes were not as likely.

Similarly, there is no way of really measuring whether each teller actually dressed down during the summer. In other words, the Tellers could have very easily dressed in the same clothing during the summer as they did in the winter. In order to measure the employees' actual dress behavior this study would have to have looked at the Tellers clothing each day in addition to their performance variables.

Another limitation involves the amount of data used. This is not to suggest that a year-and-a-half's worth of data can be classified as weak statistical methods, but because of the nature of this study a longer time span of data would have been beneficial. There are roughly two times more data points for the performance measure when employees were dressed in professional clothing rather than casual clothing. If another years worth of data had been gathered the effects of summer clothing (casual attire) might have been more apparent.

A third limitation to this study is that its sample lacked diversity in many ways. The sample was mostly (all but one) female, all white, all one position, and specific to one industry. Different cultures' values and opinions on dress vary considerably so a sample that is more ethnically diverse could lend different results. Along the same lines, taking into consideration different portions of an organization's hierarchy would be a good idea as well. As discussed earlier, authority and the perception of authority is often perceived as a function of dress and appearance. Future research's samples should include employees at various levels of the organizations.

Not only was this study industry specific, but it was specific to only one organization. It would be a stretch to say that the findings could be applied to other industries, as business bank serves a very specific purpose, and employees dress may play a different role than for example a more low-end retail setting. Even more limiting than the fact that the study was conducted in only one industry is that it was conducted using only one institution within that industry.

Future Research

Future research should address the limitation due to minimal degree of variation in dress between formal and casual clothing found in this study. The results might prove to be different if a greater difference exists between the two forms of dress.

Future research might also use a timeline that exceeds that of this study. Using a couple of years worth of data will give a more complete view of performance overtime than this study was able to do. Similarly, studies that follow should conduct their research using multiple industries with a larger sample size.

Furthermore, future research should address the lack of diversity in the participants used in this study. First, research should further study the relationship that gender has on the effects of dress on performance. This study only included one male and therefore did not offer information in this way. Would the results be the same if the sample was all male? What if the sample was a mix between male and female? Second, research should address the difference in results of this study had it been conducted in other cultures where the significance of clothing varies. Similarly, studies that follow should conduct their research using multiple positions throughout one organization, multiple organizations throughout one industry, and multiple industries throughout the business world. If future researchers are able to use a more diverse sample, in a mix of different settings, their results will offer information that can be generalized across a variety of situations. Again, generalizing the findings of this study to other organizations, financial or not, should be done using caution. The effects of dress on performance can be assumed to be different across industries and within varying corporate cultures.

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